

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will provide detailed information about the current state of resources on public lands within the planning area, and set forth a plan of action for managing those resources for the next twenty or so years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (WSAs)

Under the **Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)**, wilderness preservation is part of the BLM's multiple use mandate, and wilderness is recognized as part of a spectrum of resource values to be considered during land use planning. Under the wilderness review program, existing designated WSAs are managed in accordance with the BLM's Interim Management Plan. The status of these WSAs will not change as a result of the Uncompahgre RMP revision.



WSAs contain wilderness characteristics and are managed to preserve those values until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses. This applies to the five WSAs in the UFO: Camel Back (10,402 acres), Adobe Badlands (10,425 acres), Dolores River Canyon (13,354 acres within the UFO), Sewemup (1,803 acres within the UFO), and Tabeguache Creek Area (7,748 acres).

THE BLM ENTERS THE WILDERNESS ARENA

In 1964, the United States Congress passed the **Wilderness Act** in order to preserve a representative sample of public lands containing ecosystems in their natural state for the benefit of future generations. Until 1976, most lands considered for and designated as wilderness were managed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service.

With the passage of FLPMA in 1976, Congress directed the BLM to inventory, study, and recommend public lands under its jurisdiction for wilderness designation. In 1991, the BLM issued a Record of Decision that included wilderness recommendations for WSAs throughout the state of Colorado. Through this process, the Camel Back and Adobe Badlands WSAs were recommended as not suitable, and the Dolores River Canyon WSA, Tabeguache Creek Area (WSA), and almost all of the Sewemup WSA were recommended as suitable.

Under the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act (H.R. 631), the "Tabeguache Area" became a "congressionally designated management area." The BLM is mandated to manage the area to protect its wilderness values. The area is closed to mineral entry, and mechanized and motorized travel are prohibited.



CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Established under the authority of sections 603(c) and 202 of FLPMA, the UFO's five WSAs are being managed to preserve their wilderness values according to the interim management policy, and will continue to be managed in that manner until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses. Activities that would impair wilderness suitability are prohibited in WSAs.

FLPMA PROVISIONS FOR INTERIM MANAGEMENT OF WSAs

- **WSAs must be managed so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness.**
- **Activities that are permitted in WSAs must be temporary uses that create no new surface disturbance, nor involve permanent placement of structures.**
- **Grazing, mining, and mineral leasing uses that existed on October 21, 1976 may continue in the same manner and degree as on that date, even if this would impair wilderness suitability of the WSAs.**
- **WSAs may not be closed to appropriation under the mining laws to preserve their wilderness character.**
- **Valid existing rights must be recognized.**
- **WSAs must be managed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.**

What wilderness characteristics are found in a WSA?

A WSA has characteristics described in The Wilderness Act:

Naturalness: The area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Outstanding Opportunities: The area has either outstanding opportunities for solitude, or outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

Size: The area is at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Values: The area may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

The RMP process is open to new information, including public proposals for wilderness. According to BLM policy, the BLM may consider information on wilderness characteristics, along with information on other uses and values, when preparing land use plans. This includes determining whether BLM wilderness inventories or public wilderness proposals contain significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that has a bearing on the proposed action or generates impacts not previously analyzed.



The BLM wants your input...

- **Which BLM-administered lands in the planning area possess wilderness characteristics, and what are the characteristics?**

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